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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000045

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM UZ  
SUBJECT: Uzbek Deputy FM Kamilov Urges Progress in Key Areas

REF: TASHKENT 19; TASHKENT 43

CLASSIFIED BY: Nicholas Berliner, Pol-Econ Chief; REASON: 1.4(A),  
(B), (D)

¶11. (C) Summary: Ambassador paid a courtesy call on newly-installed First Deputy Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov on January 28. Kamilov assessed the climate in the bilateral relationship as very favorable, noting a recent decree from President Karimov on strengthening relations with the U.S. that had been sent to all GOU ministries. He stressed the importance of moving quickly on getting the Special Working Group (SWG) to Tashkent to follow up on Uzbekistan's request for "military-technical assistance," which the GOU believes to be firmly in Washington's court at this time. Kamilov also reiterated the GOU's strong interest in having Secretary Clinton visit Uzbekistan, this time noting that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which Uzbekistan chairs this year and whose summit will be held in Tashkent in June, would agree to accept the U.S. as an observer, but that China and Russia would only acquiesce to U.S. participation at the ministerial level. Kamilov also made a plea for swift agreement for his replacement as Ambassador to the U.S., Ilkhamdjan Nematov. The Ambassador told Kamilov that the U.S. would follow up quickly on these issues and noted the opportunities presented by President Karimov's speech to Parliament (Ref B), particularly in the area of supporting independent journalism in Uzbekistan amidst renewed pressure on the media. End Summary.

Special Working Group

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¶12. (C) First Deputy Foreign Minister Kamilov assumed his new duties on Jan. 27, following his return from Washington after six years as Ambassador. He stressed that the U.S. Ambassador's was the first courtesy call he received. The U.S. and Uzbekistan are "at a good stage in relations" that has been marked by "strengthening mutual trust," he observed. He noted that President Karimov had recently instructed all agencies of the Government to strengthen cooperation with the U.S. in accordance with the goals identified by the GOU for the ABC process (Ref A) and that he had made extensive reference to the U.S. during his speech to the opening session of the Parliament on January 27 (Ref B). The task before us now, said Kamilov, is to keep the momentum going to produce results.

¶13. (C) In that vein, Kamilov stressed the importance of following through on President Karimov's request of last August to General Petraeus for enhanced "military-technical cooperation." He said that the GOU is ready to receive the Special Working Group (SWG) and is only waiting for the U.S. side to communicate the dates. Kamilov reiterated the GOU's expectation that the SWG be able to

engage at the expert level and that the visit be more than a simple exchange of views. The Ambassador said that the U.S. envisioned the SWG as a thorough needs assessment that would be carried out in close cooperation with the GOU, a view with which Kamilov seemed to concur.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

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¶ 14. (C) Raising the subject of U.S. participation in the SCO Summit in Tashkent in June (Uzbekistan chairs the SCO this year), Kamilov said that most SCO member states were amenable to this. However, China and Russia remained skeptical and insisted that such participation would only be acceptable at the ministerial level, with the participation of the Secretary. Kamilov urged the U.S. to consider having the Secretary come to Tashkent, noting that this would be an important opportunity to establish contact with the SCO (as well as accomplish a GOU goal of hosting a high-level American visitor). He noted that, in the years following the SCO's establishment, Uzbekistan shared information about the organization's workings and coordinated positions to temper anti-American initiatives put forward by China and Russia. In addition to the Secretary's participation, Kamilov said that Uzbekistan would need to communicate to Russia and China what issues the U.S. would raise at an SCO meeting.

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Other Issues

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¶ 15. (C) Agreement - Kamilov requested that the Department respond quickly to the GOU request for agreement for his replacement as Ambassador in Washington, Ilkhamdjan Nematov. The Ambassador said that he believed a response would be forthcoming shortly.

Congressional Visit - Before leaving Washington, Kamilov said that Congressman Faleomavaega, as head of the Central Asian Caucus, had agreed to visit Uzbekistan again in February, although he did not have firm dates.

American Educational Institutions - Kamilov made a plea for help in having a U.S. university open a branch in Uzbekistan, noting that as Foreign Minister, he had worked to bring the U.K.'s Westminster University to Uzbekistan.

¶ 16. (C) The Ambassador cited President Karimov's speech to Parliament on January 27 (Ref B) as an opening for deeper cooperation in a number of areas, including parliamentary exchanges, Afghanistan (where Karimov again reiterated the importance of involving the neighbors), and reinforcing journalistic independence in the face of mounting pressure on the media. He noted that the ABCs provided a good framework for working together to advance this goal.

Comment

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¶ 17. (C) Kamilov's return to Tashkent is another positive development in the bilateral relationship. He is a familiar and trusted interlocutor who understands Washington. At the same time, President Karimov has given the signal to his government to move the ABC agenda forward and he will expect results. Having the SWG visit Tashkent as soon as possible is critical in this regard, as

"military-technical cooperation" is one of the signals the GOU is looking for to assess U.S. sincerity. The Uzbeks believe that they have given a lot in terms of support for Afghanistan. They know we are concerned about human rights and are willing to channel these concerns into a substantive dialogue through the ABC process. As we prepare to ask for further enhancements to NDN, we must first demonstrate that we can deliver the goods in the military-technical area. This will require not only the immediate visit of the SWG, but a clear commitment to pursue the necessary engagement with Congress to facilitate the delivery to Uzbekistan of some sort of military equipment. Follow through in this area, together with high-level Washington engagement, is necessary to secure expanded Uzbek cooperation and support on Afghanistan and NDN.

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